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1. *Explore the Intel Visual Ranking Tool. Click on the Overview and Benefits link. How does the tool facilitate students’ critical thinking? Consider the type of reasoning students demonstrate as they do Visual Ranking and how their activity involves both the cognitive and affective domains.*

Students need to be able to analyze both the data and list to synthesize criterion by which to evaluate the item s in the list. Following this, they must then Organize items according to those synthesized criterion based on their values. In essence, they must utilize the cognitive domains of critical thinking to decipher the knowledge and develop the criterion by which it must be sorted. Next, the affective domain is used to organize and sort that information to create the order of the list. The entirety of the process uses both domains described in Bloom's taxonomy. More importantly, the activity is meant to be a group process. As such, the cognitive process is not only internalized, but externalized a cemented through argument and discourse.

1. *Next click on the Tutorial (underneath Demo on the Try the Tool page) and view the animation. What are the key steps a teacher must take to set up the Visual Ranking Tool and engage students in using the tool? Read the directions on pages 1-5 of the tutorial.*

The first opportunity the teacher has to engage a student using the tool is in the project description. It is this short summary of the project that begins the critical thinking, even before they are prompted on anything that they may need to sort.

Following this, the wording of a prompt is paramount to the engagement of the students. It should be a question or statement that is a level two or, preferably, a level three question on Costa's scale. It is this prompt that limits the level of the critical thinking that a student will need. Without a prompt that reaches beyond objective thinking, the critical thinking will be limited to the cognitive side. For the sake of engaging all critical thought, the prompt should be subjective.

The next key step, another opportunity to begin the critical thinking process and engage the students is the brainstorming of the list that is to be sorted. While the affective side of critical thinking is less important during this process, this may provide a starting point for the cognitive thinking process as the students interact with each other and the educator to create the list that will later be sorted by the groups.

After this, the encouragement to debrief or create comments within the tool allow another opportunity to engage the students and seek insight into their thought process. Depending on the list, and how sensitive it may or may not be, debriefing or comments may provide the best reflection opportunity for the students. It is in reflection that growth has been shown to be the greatest.

1. *Click on the Project Examples link and explore the Project Ideas and Unit Plans. How do the examples stimulate your thinking of how to use the Visual Ranking Tool? Consider the grade level and subject area you plan to teach and how you could modify one of the projects or create your own from scratch. What curriculum goals would your Visual Ranking project address?*

I plan on teaching high school choir. As such the tool would be fairly difficult to assimilate into regular use. There are, however, a few uses for the tool that could lead to some interesting developments. The first thoughts are as a reflection tool upon highlights of the year. As an end of the year reflection with their peers, it could evaluate the successes and downfalls of the ensemble (both those of my creation or the group as a collective). This provides an opportunity to articulate why certain activities, pieces of music, concerts, tours, or anything else may have been more successful than others. Another use I was able to brainstorm in the choir classroom would be to provide students an opportunity to attempt to program the concert order. After instruction on why and how concerts are typically programmed, students could create the concert order for the music and provide justification for the order they chose. This not only forces the students to think critically about the music, but forces them into an extremely small portion of the mindset of their conductor as they try to sequence the music in the best way possible. As the sequence of a concert is subjective, there is no truly wrong answer as long as the crowd leaves happily. This leaves the doors of creativity mostly open on a unit like this. The curriculum goal would be to have students identify the factors of successful musical endeavor so that they may consciously reapply them to both their music and their life.

If I were to get a high school level course, I would also attempt to start a music literacy course that incorporates music theory, music history and music exposure further into the lives of the students than what can be achieved in a choir classroom. It would be in this type of class that this tool could truly be effective. For basic knowledge purposes, the tool could be used to create chronological lists of historical events or items within a music theory concept. For example, students could chronologically list compositional periods or composers or list, in order, musical keys according to key signature. On a more subjective and critical thinking level, students could rank their favorite composers, compositional periods, styles of musical works (sonata, cantata, opera, mass, oratorio) and justify them. They could also do the last activity from the viewpoint of a certain composer. For example, "From Beethoven's perspective, rank the compositional periods." To complete this activity, it would require knowledge of his life and his composition as well as the other critical thinking skills necessary to work through the problem and come up with an answer that musicologists can only speculate about -fairly definitively with solid justification, but nonetheless. The curriculum goal would be two-fold for this last idea. It would encourage the students to empathize with a composer, which is perhaps easier than empathizing with their peers but a step in the right direction. The second would be to identify the path of musical influences so that they may better understand the popular music of today and its roots – most of which, at this point, lie in Africa or Latin America.